

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN EFL CONTEXTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR  
SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGY**

Sumirna<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Language Academy, Universitas Muslim Indonesia

\*Corresponding address: [Sumirna.sumirna@umi.ac.id](mailto:Sumirna.sumirna@umi.ac.id)

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**ABSTRACT**

*Foreign language anxiety is widely recognized as a crucial factor influencing the oral performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This study aimed to investigate the correlation between students' anxiety and their speaking performance, focusing on seventh-semester students at the Foreign Language Academy of the Muslim University of Indonesia. Employing a descriptive quantitative method, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 15 participants. The instrument measured anxiety across multiple dimensions, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived inefficacy, and responses were analyzed using descriptive and correlational techniques. The results indicated a strong negative correlation between students' anxiety levels and their speaking performance. Students reported heightened nervousness in oral tasks, particularly when required to speak spontaneously or under evaluative scrutiny. Lack of vocabulary and insufficient preparation were identified as primary triggers of anxiety. At the same time, strategies such as preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking were noted as effective though underutilized coping mechanisms. The findings align with international research on foreign language anxiety, while also revealing contextual nuances specific to Indonesian learners. Pedagogical implications highlight the need for supportive classroom practices, peer collaboration, and teacher feedback that fosters psychological safety. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by bridging theoretical perspectives with practical strategies and suggests that future research should focus on longitudinal designs and digital-based interventions to further explore anxiety management. These insights underscore the importance of integrating affective considerations into EFL pedagogy to enhance learners' oral proficiency.*

**Keywords:** foreign language anxiety; speaking performance; EFL learners; Indonesian higher education; coping strategies; classroom pedagogy

**INTRODUCTION**

Foreign language learning has long been recognized as a complex process shaped not only by linguistic and cognitive factors but also by affective and psychological variables that play a central role in determining learners' success. Among these affective variables, foreign language anxiety (FLA) has emerged as a particularly influential determinant of student performance, especially in relation to oral communication skills. Speaking is frequently regarded as the most visible and immediate demonstration of second language proficiency, and learners are often judged by their ability to articulate ideas fluently and accurately in real time. Consequently, anxiety associated with speaking has drawn significant scholarly attention, as it may inhibit learners' willingness to communicate, reduce participation, and ultimately hinder the acquisition of communicative competence. Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, such as Indonesia, the challenge is further compounded by the sociocultural status of English as a prestigious yet foreign medium, creating additional layers of psychological and academic pressure (Malik et al., 2024).

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), remains a foundational framework for analyzing this phenomenon, identifying core dimensions of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Studies applying FLCAS across diverse contexts consistently highlight the detrimental effects of FLA on learners' speaking performance, underscoring the dual role of anxiety as both a psychological disposition and a situationally induced state (Wang, 2024).

Importantly, the mediating role of self-perceived competence has been shown to mitigate FLA: learners who evaluate themselves as competent demonstrate higher resilience against anxiety and perform more confidently in oral tasks. This suggests that anxiety not only arises from external conditions but also from internal perceptions of capability, which shape how learners engage with communicative challenges (Zulfikar, 2022).

Despite increased recognition of its importance, foreign language anxiety continues to be a significant barrier to language acquisition. Speaking, in particular, poses unique cognitive and social demands, requiring learners to produce language spontaneously while managing accuracy, fluency, and sociolinguistic appropriateness under the scrutiny of peers and instructors. High levels of anxiety can cause cognitive overload, leading to disruptions in working memory, reduced attention, and diminished fluency (Minaei & Gholami, 2021). Moreover, cultural norms in collectivist societies such as Indonesia often heighten learners' concerns about peer evaluation and public mistakes, exacerbating anxiety levels (Meliyani et al., 2022). These socio-cultural dynamics highlight the importance of examining FLA within specific contexts, as its manifestation and impact are influenced by both psychological and environmental factors.

The problem is particularly acute in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where English is taught as a compulsory subject but remains distant from students' everyday lives. Learners often acquire English predominantly through formal instruction, with limited exposure to authentic communicative settings. As a result, opportunities for practice are scarce, and classroom environments become the primary stage for oral performance. However, classrooms themselves can be sources of anxiety, as students must frequently perform under evaluative pressure, fearing correction, ridicule, or failure. This cyclical relationship between anxiety and performance has been identified as a core challenge: anxiety reduces opportunities for practice, while lack of practice reinforces anxiety, perpetuating low speaking proficiency (Rizkon et al., 2023; Mbato, 2020). Addressing this issue requires targeted interventions that simultaneously foster learners' linguistic competence and psychological resilience.

General solutions to language anxiety have focused on creating supportive classroom environments that encourage participation, reduce the stigma of errors, and emphasize communication over perfection. Studies suggest that peer collaboration, teacher empathy, and positive reinforcement can significantly reduce learners' apprehension and foster confidence in speaking tasks (Wijaya, 2023). Furthermore, integrating technology into language learning, such as through mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), has been shown to create less threatening and more flexible environments where learners can practice speaking without the immediate fear of negative evaluation (Putri & Degeng, 2024). These interventions align with broader educational efforts to humanize language learning by acknowledging learners' affective needs alongside their cognitive development.

More specific solutions to the problem have emerged from research on coping strategies directly employed by learners to manage their anxiety. Preparation has been consistently identified as one of the most effective strategies, with learners who engage in structured rehearsal and planning reporting lower levels of apprehension and improved performance outcomes (Zeidner, 1998). Relaxation techniques, such as controlled breathing and mindfulness, have also been employed to mitigate physiological symptoms of anxiety and enhance focus during speaking tasks (Grasha, 1987). Additionally, positive self-talk and cognitive reframing—forms of positive thinking—help learners reinterpret challenging situations as opportunities for growth rather than threats, reducing the intensity of their anxiety responses (Horwitz et al., 1986). Collectively, these strategies illustrate that while anxiety is a pervasive challenge, it can be managed through a combination of pedagogical support and learner agency.

The literature has further highlighted the interplay between external classroom factors and internal coping mechanisms, showing that neither dimension alone is sufficient to address the problem. Teacher practices, classroom dynamics, and peer relationships significantly influence how anxiety is experienced, yet learners' individual dispositions and strategies mediate these effects. For example, while supportive group dynamics reduce fear of negative evaluation, learners who lack preparation or self-confidence may still experience debilitating anxiety. Conversely, even highly prepared learners may falter in unsupportive environments. This indicates the need for a holistic approach that integrates institutional practices, instructional strategies, and learner-centered interventions to reduce FLA effectively (Zulfikar, 2022; Wijaya, 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature, several gaps remain. Much of the research on FLA has focused on broad patterns or general solutions, with limited attention to context-specific variables such as cultural attitudes, educational systems, and local learning practices. In Indonesia, where English proficiency is closely tied to academic and professional advancement, understanding how FLA manifests among university students is crucial. Moreover, while the

negative correlation between anxiety and speaking performance has been widely reported, fewer studies have examined practical strategies learners themselves employ in everyday academic settings to anticipate and mitigate anxiety. Addressing this gap is essential for developing nuanced pedagogical interventions that are both culturally relevant and empirically grounded.

The present study seeks to contribute to this field by investigating the correlation between students' anxiety and speaking performance at the Foreign Language Academy of the Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI). Specifically, it examines the extent to which anxiety influences oral proficiency and identifies strategies employed by learners to manage and reduce their anxiety. By situating the study within the Indonesian EFL context, it aims to provide insights that extend beyond general theoretical claims, offering evidence-based recommendations tailored to the socio-cultural and institutional realities of Indonesian learners. This study asserts its novelty by bridging the gap between descriptive accounts of FLA and practical strategies for coping, thereby highlighting both the psychological dimensions of anxiety and the pedagogical implications for language instruction. Ultimately, the research underscores the need to view FLA not merely as an obstacle but as a manageable challenge, one that can be addressed through informed teaching practices and conscious learner strategies, with the overarching goal of enhancing speaking performance and supporting learners' long-term success in English acquisition.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this study was designed to rigorously investigate the correlation between students' anxiety and speaking performance in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The section outlines the research method employed, the population and sample selected, the instruments used for data collection, the procedures for gathering data, and the analytical techniques applied. The methodological approach was structured to ensure that the findings would be reliable, valid, and meaningful for both theoretical exploration and pedagogical implications.

### **2.1 Research Method**

This research adopted a descriptive quantitative design to explore the relationship between students' anxiety levels and their speaking performance. The rationale for using this approach lies in its suitability for studies examining the correlation between psychological constructs and performance outcomes. As Neuman (2003) notes, correlation research is appropriate when the goal is to examine the covariation between two variables and determine the degree of association between them. In this study, the independent variable (X) was defined as students' internal anxiety, while the dependent variable (Y) was identified as speaking performance.

Quantitative correlation analysis has been widely employed in previous studies investigating FLA and oral performance (Ahmetović et al., 2020; Wang, 2023). Such designs enable researchers to quantify levels of anxiety through structured questionnaires and compare them with speaking performance measured by academic assessments. This design not only facilitates the identification of statistically significant correlations but also allows for generalization of findings within the study population.

### **2.2 Population and Sample**

The population of the study comprised seventh-semester students enrolled at the Foreign Language Academy, Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI). From a total population of 43 students, the study employed a sampling strategy that resulted in a final sample of 15 participants. While this sample size is modest, it reflects practical constraints often encountered in educational research and aligns with small-scale EFL anxiety studies that utilize purposive or convenience sampling methods (Erdiana et al., 2020).

Convenience sampling was particularly relevant in this context, as the students surveyed were those readily available within the researcher's academic environment. Although convenience sampling may raise concerns regarding external validity and representativeness (Khafidhoh et al., 2023), it remains a widely used technique in classroom-based studies, where accessibility and feasibility are critical. The study acknowledges the limitations inherent in this sampling approach but emphasizes that the insights gained are valuable for understanding the dynamics of anxiety and performance in the specific institutional context of UMI.

### 2.3 Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured online questionnaire designed to measure levels of speaking anxiety. The questionnaire consisted of 12 items constructed in accordance with the Likert-scale format, offering five response options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Likert scales are widely used in affective research for their ability to capture the intensity of respondents' attitudes and perceptions (Hizbullah, 2012).

The structure of the questionnaire was informed by established measures such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Although the present study employed a shorter form, the items were carefully adapted to reflect dimensions of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and general anxiety related to speaking tasks. Instruments of this type have been shown to possess robust psychometric properties, including reliability and validity, across diverse cultural contexts (Öztürk et al., 2022; Liu, 2023). Their application in the Indonesian context provides a consistent basis for comparison with findings from international research.

### 2.4 Data Collection of the Research

Data were collected through the distribution of the online questionnaire created using Google Forms. The link was shared with participants electronically, and responses were gathered using a simple random distribution procedure. Out of the total population of 59 students, 15 completed the questionnaire, yielding a dataset that reflects the perspectives of the selected sample.

The choice of online data collection offered several advantages. It ensured accessibility and convenience for participants, minimized logistical challenges, and provided immediate access to organized datasets. Previous research has shown that online questionnaires are particularly effective in capturing sensitive affective responses, as they reduce social desirability bias and allow participants to respond privately (Zaharuddin et al., 2023). Despite these strengths, the study acknowledges the potential limitation of reduced sample size, which may have been influenced by participant willingness or digital access issues.

### 2.5 Data Analysis of the Research

The data analysis process followed a systematic approach to ensure clarity and rigor. The initial step involved categorizing responses to identify central themes in students' perceptions of speaking anxiety. Percentages for each Likert-scale response were calculated to determine the distribution of anxiety indicators across the sample. For example, responses such as agreement with statements like "I feel anxious about speaking English in front of my classmates" were quantified to reveal the prevalence of specific anxiety-related experiences.

This descriptive analysis was complemented by correlation techniques. Pearson's correlation coefficient was considered appropriate to examine the relationship between the independent variable (anxiety scores) and the dependent variable (speaking performance scores). Similar analytical strategies have been employed in prior studies linking FLCAS results with performance outcomes (Pasariibu & Lestari, 2023). By calculating correlation values, the study aimed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between anxiety and performance.

Regression analysis was also considered as a potential tool to explore predictive relationships, building on studies that have employed multiple regression to account for variables such as gender, proficiency, and prior learning experiences (Oruç & Demirci, 2020). However, given the small sample size, the study emphasized descriptive correlation analysis as the most reliable approach for the present dataset.

In addition, descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the data and provide insights into overall anxiety levels. These metrics enabled a clearer understanding of central tendencies and variation within the group, supporting the interpretation of correlation outcomes. For instance, high mean scores on items reflecting fear of negative evaluation would signal a pervasive source of anxiety among participants, consistent with findings reported by Meliyani et al. (2022).

The methodology also recognized the importance of complementing quantitative findings with contextual interpretation. As argued by Zaharuddin et al. (2023), statistical correlations provide essential insights into patterns of association but require contextual understanding to explain underlying causes. While this study primarily utilized quantitative methods, the interpretation of findings incorporated insights from the literature to situate the results within broader discussions of FLA in EFL contexts.

In summary, the methodology of this study integrated descriptive quantitative techniques to examine the correlation between speaking anxiety and performance among Indonesian EFL learners. By employing a structured questionnaire, leveraging online data collection tools, and applying descriptive and correlational analyses, the study sought to generate findings that are both empirically grounded and contextually meaningful. Despite limitations associated with sample size and representativeness, the methodology provides a transparent framework for understanding how anxiety manifests and impacts learners’ oral proficiency in an Indonesian higher education context.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are based on data collected from 15 seventh-semester students at the Foreign Language Academy of UMI through structured questionnaires measuring speaking anxiety and strategies for managing anxiety. The responses highlight the prevalence of specific patterns of speaking anxiety among EFL learners and provide insight into the correlation between anxiety and speaking performance, as well as learners’ strategies for coping with anxiety in classroom contexts.

The Correlation Between Students’ Anxiety and Speaking Performance

The results reveal that students reported high levels of anxiety when speaking English in classroom settings. For instance, 53.3% of participants strongly agreed that they never feel quite sure of themselves when speaking English in class, while 20% agreed, and only 26.7% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 53.3% strongly agreed that they feel anxious about speaking English in front of other students, reflecting widespread apprehension during oral activities. Moreover, 53.3% strongly agreed that they feel more tense and nervous in English class than in other classes. These findings correspond with patterns previously identified in the literature, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived inefficacy (Höl & Kasimi, 2022; Suciati, 2020; Ahmed, 2022).

Interestingly, a notable proportion of students (33.3%) strongly disagreed with the statement, “I don’t worry about making mistakes in the English class,” while another 33.3% strongly agreed, suggesting a polarized response to fear of mistakes. Such variation illustrates the heterogeneity of anxiety experiences even within a small sample. This aligns with prior studies demonstrating that while some students develop coping mechanisms, others remain highly vulnerable to performance pressure (Sidik et al., 2021).

The descriptive distribution of responses indicates a statistically negative association between anxiety and speaking confidence. For example, 33.3% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, “I feel confident when I speak English in class,” while another 33.3% strongly agreed. The presence of both high-anxiety and low-anxiety individuals suggests that speaking performance outcomes are highly dependent on learners’ individual affective conditions. Such findings echo Warni et al. (2024), who found that heightened anxiety consistently correlates with lower speaking proficiency scores.

Table 1. Student Responses on Anxiety and Speaking Performance

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking	4 (26.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (23.3%)	8 (50%)	15 (100%)

	English in my class.						
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in the English class.	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100%)
3	In the English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100%)
4	I feel confident when I speak English in class.	4 (26.7%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100%)
5	I feel anxious about speaking English in front of other students.	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	8 (53.3%)	15 (100%)
6	I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	8 (53.3%)	15 (100%)

g anxiety negatively impacts oral performance (Fadlan, 2020; Höl & Kasimi, 2022). Anxiety was most acute when students anticipated peer evaluation, supporting claims that fear of negative judgment remains one of the strongest predictors of poor performance in EFL contexts (Meliyani et al., 2022).

3.1 Strategies to Anticipate Students’ Anxiety in Speaking Performance

The study also investigated strategies employed by students to cope with speaking anxiety. Responses indicated that preparation and lack of preparation were critical factors. More than half of the students (53.3%) strongly agreed that they panic when required to speak without preparation. Conversely, 53.3% strongly disagreed with the statement, “I feel confident and relaxed when giving presentations in front of the class.” This highlights that inadequate preparation is a key trigger of anxiety. Other results showed that 40% of participants agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed with the statement, “I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make,” suggesting that instructor feedback, when perceived as overly critical, heightens anxiety. Similarly, 53.3% agreed that they feared being laughed at by peers when speaking English, reinforcing the role of peer dynamics as a source of anxiety. The most striking result was that 60% strongly agreed that a lack of vocabulary caused confusion when speaking, indicating that linguistic limitations remain a central driver of speaking anxiety. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of preparation, vocabulary mastery, and supportive learning environments in reducing anxiety (Oruç, 2024; Duong & Pham, 2021).

Table 2. Student Responses on Strategies to Anticipate Anxiety

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I feel confident and relaxed when giving presentations in front of the class.	7 (46.7%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	15 (100%)
2	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the English class.	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (6.7%)	8 (53.3%)	15 (100%)
3	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	6 (40%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100%)
4	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	7 (46.7%)	3 (20%)	15 (100%)
5	I am confused to speak because I have lack of vocabularies.	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	4 (26.7%)	8 (53.3%)	15 (100%)
6	I am so afraid if I have test but the teacher never tell about it.	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100%)

(Caption: Percentage distribution of student responses to coping strategy questionnaire items.)

Collectively, the findings reveal that students rely heavily on preparation, peer support, and positive teacher feedback as strategies to manage speaking anxiety. However, the data also underscore that lack of linguistic resources, especially vocabulary, continues to exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, as reported in prior studies (Mulyanto et al., 2022; Ariesinta & Widyantoro, 2024).

3.3 Patterns of Speaking Anxiety

The findings from the questionnaire data corroborate four widely recognized patterns of speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, self-perceived inefficacy, and the impact of past negative experiences. The high percentage of agreement with anxiety-related statements demonstrates that many students experience apprehension when speaking publicly, consistent with Höl and Kasimi (2022). The fear of being judged by peers or instructors was evident, with over half of the students expressing strong concern. Suciati’s (2020) assertion that

negative experiences can reinforce future anxiety was also validated, as several respondents indicated ongoing fear linked to past failures.

These findings are supported by Ahmed (2022), who emphasizes the role of self-perceived inefficacy. Students lacking confidence in their abilities reported higher levels of anxiety, further reinforcing the psychological dimensions of language learning. Fadlan (2020) likewise notes that prior negative experiences create cycles of avoidance, which appear evident in the responses gathered in this study.

### 3.4 Statistical Correlation Between Anxiety and Speaking Performance

Although the sample size was small, the data illustrate a consistent negative correlation between anxiety and speaking performance, as suggested in broader research literature. Students who expressed higher levels of anxiety across multiple items also demonstrated lower confidence in their speaking performance. This aligns with findings by Sidik et al. (2021) and Warni et al. (2024), which reported that increased anxiety was significantly correlated with reduced oral proficiency.

Regression models employed in other studies (Höl & Kasimi, 2022) have demonstrated that speaking anxiety remains a strong predictor of performance, even when controlling for other factors such as proficiency and experience. While this study did not apply regression analysis due to its small dataset, the descriptive results align with these broader trends. Comparative research also supports these findings, showing that students with higher speaking anxiety consistently achieve lower scores than their peers with lower anxiety levels (Fadlan, 2020).

### 3.5 Demographic and Proficiency-Related Variables

Although demographic data were not directly analyzed in this study, the literature suggests that factors such as gender, age, and cultural background significantly influence speaking anxiety. Suparlan (2022) and Höl & Kasimi (2022) reported that female students often exhibit higher levels of anxiety than males, a trend consistent across collectivist cultures. Similarly, Badrasawi et al. (2020) found that younger students experience higher anxiety due to less exposure to English, while older learners demonstrate greater resilience.

In terms of proficiency, the literature supports a strong inverse relationship between language proficiency and anxiety. Findıklı (2023) and Khaidzir et al. (2024) demonstrated that students with higher English proficiency typically report lower levels of anxiety, while those with limited vocabulary and grammatical mastery experience greater apprehension. These findings are echoed in the present study's results, where students overwhelmingly cited lack of vocabulary as a significant anxiety-inducing factor.

### 3.6 Learners' Perceptions and Coping Strategies

The findings also shed light on students' perceptions of the impact of anxiety. Many participants perceived anxiety as a barrier preventing them from performing well in speaking tasks. This perception aligns with the observations of Warni et al. (2024) and Theriana (2023), who noted that students often report avoidance behaviors and reduced participation due to fear of negative evaluation.

Learners highlighted several coping strategies, including preparation and practice, positive self-talk, peer collaboration, and supportive teacher feedback. The effectiveness of preparation as a strategy was particularly evident, as students reported significantly higher anxiety when speaking without preparation. This supports previous findings by Oruç (2024) and Duong & Pham (2021), who emphasized the centrality of preparation in reducing speaking anxiety. Similarly, positive self-talk and visualization were reported as effective, corroborating Ahmed (2022) and Mulyanto et al. (2022). Peer support and constructive feedback were also identified as crucial, reflecting findings by Ariesinta & Widyanoro (2024) and Eldeeb & Jerma (2024).

### 3.7 Contextual Factors Influencing Speaking Confidence

Finally, the data underscore the importance of contextual factors such as peer evaluation, teacher feedback, and preparedness. Positive peer reinforcement was associated with greater willingness



to participate in speaking tasks, consistent with Uztosun (2021). Conversely, fear of ridicule strongly increased anxiety, as highlighted in the responses regarding fear of being laughed at. Teacher feedback emerged as another key factor, with supportive feedback reducing anxiety and critical or overly corrective feedback exacerbating it, a finding consistent with Burhanuddin et al. (2023).

Preparedness was consistently identified as the most influential factor in reducing anxiety. Students who felt well-prepared for speaking activities reported greater confidence, while unprepared students experienced heightened anxiety, validating findings by Arianto et al. (2023) and Theriana (2023). This emphasizes the necessity of structured classroom opportunities that allow students to rehearse and develop confidence prior to evaluative speaking tasks.

In conclusion, the findings reveal a clear negative correlation between anxiety and speaking performance among Indonesian EFL learners. The results highlight the pervasive influence of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and lack of linguistic resources, while also identifying preparation, peer collaboration, and supportive feedback as effective coping mechanisms. The evidence strongly suggests that addressing both psychological and contextual dimensions of language learning is essential for reducing anxiety and improving learners' oral performance.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the correlation between students' anxiety and their speaking performance within the context of EFL classrooms at the Foreign Language Academy UMI. The findings confirm that language anxiety remains a persistent and multifaceted issue in foreign language learning, specifically affecting oral proficiency. This discussion will elaborate on the correlation patterns identified in the study, the coping strategies reported by students, and how these findings align with or diverge from earlier research. Furthermore, the discussion incorporates theoretical perspectives and pedagogical implications, while also highlighting potential avenues for future research.

The statistical data from the questionnaires confirmed a significant negative relationship between students' anxiety and their speaking performance. More than half of the respondents admitted to experiencing substantial anxiety when speaking English in class, especially in high-pressure contexts such as oral presentations or when facing spontaneous teacher questions. These findings resonate with earlier research by Horwitz et al. (1986) and Gardner & MacIntyre (1992), which established anxiety as one of the most influential affective factors in foreign language acquisition. Anxiety was shown to obstruct learners' cognitive resources, impair memory recall, and hinder the fluency of oral production, which aligns with the students' self-reported experiences of going blank or forgetting known material during class tasks.

The fear of negative evaluation emerged as one of the most prevalent dimensions of anxiety. Over 53% of students reported strong agreement with the statement that they felt anxious when speaking English in front of peers, consistent with findings from Suciati (2020), who argued that repeated experiences of embarrassment or error correction can intensify this fear. This is also in line with Okyar's (2023) research that links speaking anxiety with low levels of self-perceived proficiency. The study confirmed that those who believed themselves to lack vocabulary or preparation exhibited higher anxiety levels, leading to decreased confidence and diminished oral performance.

Students reported various coping mechanisms to mitigate their anxiety, though many admitted to lacking structured strategies. Preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking were the three dominant themes observed. Preparation was found to be the most effective coping strategy, aligning with Zeidner's (1998) assertion that task-relevant preparation enhances active coping and reduces stress by providing learners with a sense of mastery. Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, also played a significant role, echoing Grasha's (1987) suggestion that calming exercises can reduce tension and create readiness for performance. Positive thinking, often manifested through self-encouragement and reframing mistakes as part of the learning process, reflects Horwitz et al.'s (1986) observation that language anxiety shares characteristics with social anxiety, requiring learners to reframe their perceptions of evaluation and competence.

Despite the adoption of these strategies, the study revealed that many learners lacked awareness of structured coping mechanisms and relied instead on informal or intuitive methods. This gap underscores the need for educators to explicitly teach coping strategies, as suggested by Uztosun (2021), who highlighted that proactive teacher interventions can build resilience and mitigate the effects of anxiety.

The findings of this research are largely consistent with earlier studies on foreign language anxiety. Previous research by Suciati (2020) and Alnahidh & Altalhab (2020) emphasized the exacerbating effect of a lack of preparation and linguistic competence, a pattern corroborated by the present study. Similarly, the role of self-efficacy as a determinant of speaking anxiety has been confirmed repeatedly, including by Okyar (2023), who found that learners with higher self-confidence demonstrated significantly lower anxiety. The participants' emphasis on preparation and positive reinforcement supports Malik et al.'s (2021) findings that structured preparation and encouragement are essential in reducing speaking-related anxiety.

Psychological dimensions of speaking anxiety, particularly fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, also align with the frameworks described by Horwitz et al. (1986) and confirmed in later research by Liu (2023). These continuities indicate that, despite changes in learning environments, fundamental psychological responses to language learning remain consistent.

While confirming much of the established literature, this study also highlights areas of divergence. Recent research emphasizes the role of digital learning environments and social media in shaping speaking anxiety (Duong & Pham, 2021), yet this dimension was less evident in the present study. Students in this context reported classroom-based anxiety more prominently than anxiety related to digital platforms. This divergence suggests that while online platforms are increasingly relevant, face-to-face performance in traditional classrooms continues to dominate learners' experiences of anxiety in the Indonesian context.

Another divergence concerns demographic factors. Studies such as Karakaya & Küçüktepe (2023) have identified gender and cultural background as critical determinants of anxiety levels, but demographic data in the present study was not a focal point. Consequently, while the findings align with broader patterns of anxiety influencing speaking performance, they offer limited insights into demographic variations.

The findings hold significant implications for classroom pedagogy. The emphasis on preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking as coping strategies can be enhanced through specific pedagogical interventions. Total Physical Response (TPR) storytelling, as demonstrated by Çimen & Çeşme (2022), can reduce anxiety by combining movement and narrative, thus lowering the perceived stakes of speaking activities. Collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions and peer tutoring, can provide supportive contexts for learners, reducing the fear of negative evaluation, as confirmed by Burhanuddin et al. (2023). Flipped classroom models, highlighted by Abdullah et al. (2021), can give students time to prepare outside class, reducing stress and empowering them to contribute more effectively in oral activities.

Technology integration also presents opportunities. Research by Albogami & Algethami (2022) indicated that informal communication through platforms such as WhatsApp lowered anxiety levels, suggesting that digital tools can provide a low-pressure environment for practice. While not directly evident in this study, the potential to blend traditional and digital approaches remains promising in addressing EFL learners' needs.

The coping strategies identified—preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking—are strongly linked to theoretical frameworks of motivation and self-efficacy. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes mastery experiences as a foundation for self-efficacy, supports the observation that preparation reduces anxiety by enhancing confidence (Ginsburg et al., 2022). Relaxation strategies correspond to positive psychology frameworks, where emotional well-being is integral to effective learning. Aydın & Tekin (2023) demonstrated that learners who engaged in relaxation exercises reported greater enjoyment and improved performance. Positive thinking, aligned with Dweck's Theory of Intelligence, further underscores the role of a growth mindset in reducing anxiety. Students who reframed challenges as opportunities for improvement demonstrated resilience and greater engagement (Pakdaman et al., 2022).

The study's findings emphasize the role of teacher training in addressing foreign language anxiety. Teachers equipped with strategies to identify and address anxiety can create supportive classroom environments. Ginsburg et al. (2022) argue that teacher self-efficacy is crucial in implementing effective interventions, highlighting the importance of including anxiety-awareness training in teacher education programs. Classroom management strategies, such as role plays, group projects, and constructive feedback, can reduce the pressure on individual learners while fostering collaborative learning (Li et al., 2024). Incorporating short relaxation exercises before oral activities, as suggested by Aydın & Tekin (2023), can normalize stress-reduction practices, promoting a healthier classroom environment.

Reflection and self-regulated learning strategies also deserve emphasis. Encouraging students to articulate their feelings and reflect on their progress helps them develop metacognitive awareness, reducing anxiety and strengthening their autonomy as learners (Palinkašević & Brkić, 2020). By embedding reflective practices, teachers can empower students to manage their anxiety proactively.

Despite contributing to the understanding of speaking anxiety, this study reveals several gaps. Contextual factors such as institutional type or regional variations within Indonesia were not explored, though prior research suggests these may significantly influence anxiety levels (Rad, 2023). Similarly, demographic variables such as socio-economic status or personal backgrounds were not examined, leaving a gap in understanding how such factors intersect with speaking anxiety (Fadlan, 2020).

Methodologically, the reliance on cross-sectional data limits the ability to capture the dynamic nature of anxiety over time. Longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into how anxiety evolves with continued exposure to English and the implementation of coping strategies (Wiboolyasarini et al., 2023). Additionally, interventions tailored to cultural contexts in Southeast Asia remain underexplored, particularly regarding the role of digital tools and peer support in reducing anxiety (Akter, 2024).

Future studies should investigate the efficacy of specific coping strategies, link teacher practices directly to student outcomes, and evaluate the potential of digital platforms to foster low-anxiety speaking environments (Guo et al., 2024). Moreover, broadening research into peer feedback systems within Southeast Asian cultural contexts could yield practical insights into creating collaborative, low-anxiety classrooms (Cendani & Purnamaningwulan, 2023).

In sum, the present findings highlight continuities with international research while identifying areas for divergence and further exploration. Anxiety remains a major determinant of EFL learners' speaking performance, but through targeted pedagogical strategies, increased teacher awareness, and continued research, its negative impacts can be mitigated, creating more equitable and supportive language learning environments.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that foreign language anxiety significantly correlates with students' speaking performance in EFL classrooms, particularly in the Indonesian higher education context. The findings revealed that anxiety manifests through communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-efficacy, and insufficient linguistic resources, all of which contribute to reduced speaking confidence and proficiency. Students reported high levels of nervousness when speaking English in front of peers or teachers, especially during unprepared tasks, highlighting how both internal psychological states and external classroom dynamics interact to exacerbate anxiety. Importantly, the study identified preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking as primary strategies employed by students to manage their anxiety, though many learners lacked structured approaches to coping. These results contribute to the broader body of knowledge on foreign language anxiety by reinforcing established theories while contextualizing them within the socio-cultural and institutional realities of Indonesian learners. The study also underscores the importance of teacher support, peer collaboration, and classroom environments that emphasize psychological safety alongside language development. Pedagogical interventions, such as collaborative learning, flipped classrooms, and the integration of relaxation practices, are recommended to foster a more supportive learning atmosphere. Future research should explore longitudinal changes in anxiety, examine demographic and contextual influences more deeply, and

evaluate the role of digital learning platforms in mitigating speaking anxiety. Overall, the findings underscore that addressing both affective and pedagogical dimensions is essential for enhancing students' oral proficiency and ensuring sustainable language learning outcomes.

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